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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002883

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: A POLITICAL PARTY PRIMER

REF: A. ABUJA 2202

[1](#)B. ABUJA 2862

Classified by DCM Timothy D. Andrews. Reasons: 1.5 (B & D).

[1](#)1. (C) INTRODUCTION: With the registration of three new political parties, the political landscape for Nigeria's 2003 election cycle now includes six political parties: the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), the Alliance for Democracy (AD), the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), the National Democratic Party (NDP), the All People's Grand Alliance (APGA), United Nigerian People's Party (UNPP). By definition, each party has a national character and exists under guidelines that define how many offices they must maintain throughout the country. Given President Obasanjo's perceived electoral weakness, it is too early to predict what the scene may look like as elections approach, but the following snapshot provides the current status of each. END INTRODUCTION.

#### People's Democratic Party (PDP)

[1](#)2. (C) The ruling PDP is blessed with some of the strongest personalities in the country, including the incumbent President Olusegun Obasanjo. However, this blessing is also its curse. The PDP is formed from a core group of supporters of the late Shehu Yar'adua and led by current Vice-president Atiku Abubakar, but the party is augmented by numerous locally powerful politicians who agreed to support the party in the previous round of elections. This marriage of convenience, while effective in 1999, has grown strained. There just are not enough political "goods" for all the potentates in the party. The President embodies incumbency's advantages, but he has very little personal support within the party. Vice President Atiku Abubakar, on the other hand, is a highly proficient politician who has spent his time building relationships at home while his boss traveled the world. The rift between Obasanjo and Atiku (ref B) is almost public and probably irreparable. An outright public break between the two men would weaken each and could cause many of the local strongmen to flee to other parties with little risk to their own local political futures.

#### Alliance for Democracy (AD)

[1](#)3. (C) The AD, the second of the three parties, while maintaining a presence nationwide, is a party of Southwest Nigeria (Yorubaland). As such, the AD remains active in national politics, but has little hope of fielding a presidential candidate. For now, the AD appears content to consolidate its hold on the Southwest while expanding into neighboring areas where possible. According to some party leaders, the AD hopes to pick up a few Senate and House seats in the South-South and the Middle Belt areas. One has said that the party would be competitive for statewide offices in Kwara, Plateau and Benue states in the coming elections. The desire of the AD politicians is to maintain a distinct Yoruba character while attracting some minority support from these mixed regions.

#### All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP)

[1](#)4. (C) The ANPP changed its name from APP in anticipation of a merger with the UNPP, which subsequently was aborted. The ANPP has attracted a diverse list of supporters from throughout the nation. This makes for strange bedfellows. One announced presidential candidate, former military leader Mohammedu Buhari, appeals to the Northern masses but is anathema to the ANPP's core backers, Northern elites. It is making efforts to attract more support in the South-South and Southeast in order to continue Northern influence in Nigeria's political process. Its prospects for gaining the presidency depend largely on the travails of the PDP

and Obasanjo's decisions on self-succession.

#### National Democratic Party (NDP)

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15. (C) The NDP was allegedly registered with the support of former military leader Ibrahim Babangida (IBB). The NDP has a scattering of support among youth, particularly in the North but will wield little influence in the upcoming elections if it cannot attract a big name candidate. The clear preference of the party's leadership and grassroots supporters is to convince IBB himself to become the party's standard bearer. But IBB's current intentions are unclear, and he has other vehicles that might prove more roadworthy.

#### All People's Grand Alliance (APGA)

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16. (C) The APGA, also midwifed by IBB, has also met with little success in attracting nationwide support. Its hope seems to be to evolve into the party of choice for the Igbo community of the Southeast. While it has had some success in attracting Igbo politicians, the Igbo themselves are split on what their role should be in the elections and what strategy to pursue. Some are content to play second fiddle to a Northern standard-bearer while others argue that the time has come for the Igbo to present a serious Presidential candidate of their own. If the APGA can help consolidate Igbo views, it might evolve into a Southeastern version of the AD and become the powerbroker for the Southeast. If not, the party may wither on the vine.

#### United Nigerian People's Party (UNPP)

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17. (C) The UNPP, the third party reportedly formed with IBB's support, has since turned on its reported benefactor over alleged broken promises. While enjoying some success in gaining supporters outside the North, it has not been able to position itself as an alternative to the original three parties and appears in no danger of doing so soon.

18. (C) COMMENT: While the political situation remains very fluid, some lines are discernible. The PDP and the ANPP remain the two parties to beat in national elections, with the AD solid in its home base. If the PDP cannot resolve its internal differences, its strongest supporters will have no reason to remain loyal and can jump to one of the other parties with relative impunity. The ANPP is best-positioned to capitalize on the disarray within the ruling party and hopes to pick up significant support in the upcoming weeks as succession issues are being sorted out. As always, personalities matter more than parties in the crunch of an election campaign. Until fence-sitters and aisle-crossers settle down, it will remain impossible to estimate how the parties will fare in legislative and gubernatorial elections.

JETER